

CONDUCTOR PAT FRANCIS

HOW THE YELLOWSTONE EXCURSION ESCAPED ITS PURSUER

BY FRANK H. SPEARMAN

THERE had been some talk at headquarters about our conductors. It was intimated, and freely, from the auditing department that the men of the punch were not dividing fairly with the company.

To this effect the general manager wrote Bucks, superintendent of the mountain division. Bucks filed the letter away in the stove. Another communication fared no better. But there were some new people at headquarters; they had a record to make, and they proposed to write part of it on our backs. Bucks got another letter; he threw it in the stove.

Pat Barlie often and often said he recom-

mended no man to drink whisky; he only recommended the whisky. I recommend no rising railroad man to burn the third letter on the same subject from his general manager; I merely recommend Bucks. He was at that time running the West End. They had tried running the West End without Bucks a while; then they had tried again running it with him. In both instances it was different.

But the next time the general manager was out in his "special," he spoke to Bucks on the subject as if the mention were a virgin touch. Bucks muttered something about the general character of the trainmen and the decent lives and habits of the passenger conductors, and finished with an incidental expression of confidence in the men; that was about all.

But the headquarters people, who were largely Boston, had ways and means all their own; and failing to interest Bucks in their hobby, they took a tack like this.

To begin with, the night was bad. A holy fright, Pat Francis called it, and Pat had

seen most of the bad nights in the mountains for twenty-two years steady. It was snowing and raining and sleeting that night, all at once; and blowing—it blew the oil out of the guide-cups. From the platform of the Wickiup—nobody in the gorge would call it a depot—from the Wickiup platform at Medicine Bend, Number One seemed to roll into division that night one reeking sheet of alkali ice—soda and frost solid from lamp to lamp.

She was late, too, with a pair of the best engines that ever climbed a mountain heading her. She had lost time every mile of the way from the plains, and she was ordered west with another double-head and a pusher all the way over the Horseback. It was because there was a Yellowstone excursion aboard. The Columbian Pacific connection was on that account especially desired; and that night at twelve o'clock, mountain time, with Number One especially late into the Bend, and the track especially bad, and the pull especially heavy, it looked—that Columbian Pacific connection—especially doubtful, except over in the despatcher's offices, where

they were being pounded to make it by the excursion bureau.

Bucks was down that night. There were many bad nights in the mountains, but Bucks never missed any of them by going to bed. On bad nights, Bucks, like a switchman's pipe, was always out. He—Bucks—personally appeared at the Wickiup to see that things went. The men liked him because he was always ready to do anything he asked them to do. There was an *esprit*, a *morale*—whatever you call it—and a loyalty to Bucks personally, which made our men take the chances that pay checks don't cover.

So, although the Columbian Pacific connection looked especially doubtful that night, nevertheless there was Bucks, under a slouching Stetson and an Irish frieze that caught all the water coming its way, standing at the drivers of the head engine, while Jack Moore, in leather from heel to jaw, went into the slush under her to touch up an eccentric with a reputation for cussedness in a pinch. And a minute later Bucks was walking back to figure with the out con-

ductor, Pat Francis, how to make schedule across to Wild Hat; though, as they talked, each man knew the other was not thinking at all of how to make schedule, but thinking—though never a word out loud of it, and hell to face all the way up the gorge on top of it—of how with flesh and blood and steel to beat schedule that night and land the uncertain connection, in spite of wind and weather and the bureau's fears and the despatcher's growls.

And all this for what? To dump a hundred or two Brooklyn people into the Yellowstone twenty-four hours earlier than they otherwise would have been dumped, though without doubt they would have been just that much better off loafing twenty-four hours longer away from their newspapers and ferries and street cars. Pat Francis listened grimly. A short, stocky fellow, Pat Francis. Not fat, but firm as a Bessemer bar, and with considerably quicker play in his joints. He listened grimly, for he thought he could domino every play Bucks could make when it came to tricks for saving time on the Wild Hat run. Yet

it heartened even Pat Francis, uncompromising and grim, to have his superintendent there in the storm helping cut out the work for such a particularly beastly pull.

As Bucks broke away and started for the door of the Wickiup, Morris Barker—the conductor who had just brought the train in—saluted, walking out. With his coat buttoned snug, in the comfortable insolence of a man going home, Morris stepped to the edge of the platform to exchange confidences with Pat Francis.

“Pat, there’s a half-fare back in the Portland sleeper. I heard McIntyre say at McCloud that some of Alfabet Smith’s men are working up here. Anyway there’s a cattleman in a canvas coat in the chair car, smooth face, red tie, to look out for. He got on at Harding and tried a short fare on me. I sized him up for a spotter.”

“Why didn’t you chuck him off?” growled Pat Francis.

“He put up after a while—and you bet that fare goes in with an embroidered report. Well, good luck, Patsy.”

Pat Francis raised his lamp through the

fog and rain at the engineers. Jack Moore coughed, suddenly and twice, with his hollow whistle. The hind engine saluted hoarsely; from the rear the pusher piped shrill, and Bucks in the doorway watched the panting train pull taut up the Bend into the swirling snow. And he knew as he watched that nothing worth considering would get away from Pat Francis—not a scheme nor a cut-off nor a minute nor a re-vamped coupon ticket. Pat before quitting at Benton, Pat up the gorge and over the Horseback, was pretty sure to catch everything inside the vestibules.

He swung up on the platform of the baggage-car as the train moved out, and shook the snow off his cap as he opened the door. He set his lamp on an up-end trunk, took off his overcoat and hung it up. In the front end of the car a pack of hunting dogs yelped a dismal chorus. Old John Parker, the baggageman was checking up a pile of trunks that rose tier on tier to the roof of the car. John Parker wore a pair of disreputable iron spectacles. His hair, scant where it wasn't extinct, tumbled about his head loose at both

ends. His gray beard was a good bit stronger in the fly than in the hoist, and it blew in the wind thin as a coach whip; but old John had behind his dirty spectacles a pair of eyes just as fine as steel. Francis opened his train box and asked the baggage-man why he didn't kill those dogs, and getting no answer—for John Parker was checking hard and stopped only to shift his whiskers off the clip—the conductor got out his blue pencil and his black pencil and filed them away, took up his punch and his trip checks and put them in their proper pockets, shifted his time-table from the box to still another pocket, and picked up his lantern. The head-end brakeman coming in just then with a sash puller, Francis asked him to clean up the globe.

While the brakeman fished for a piece of waste, the conductor moved his wet overcoat a peg nearer the stove and spread it out better, and listened to a wild rumor old John Parker had picked up about Number One's being turned into a strictly "limited" and carrying a "diner" west of Bear Dance. Without wasting any comment, Pat looked

at his watch and listened to the click of the truck over the fish-plates under foot, and to the angry tremulous roar of the three furnaces melting coal to push Number One up against the wind, that curled like a corkscrew down the long, narrow gorge. Then he took the lantern from his menial, and strode quickly through the vestibule into the dirty light and foul air of the smoker.

"Tickets!"

No "please," that night, just "Tickets!" short and snappy as a bear trap. He could talk very differently at home to the babies—but there was no suggestion of kootsyng in the tone that called for transportation in the smoker. He passed down the aisle, pulling, hauling, shaking the snorting brutes, noting, punching, checking under the rays of his lamp, until the last man was passed and he walked into the chair car. There was only one "go-back," a sleepy Italian who couldn't—even after he had been jerked out of his seat and turned upside down and inside out, and shaken and cursed—still he couldn't find his ticket. So Pat Francis passed him with the shocking intimation

which amounted to an assurance, that if he didn't find it by the time he got back he would throw him off.

The transportation on Number One was mostly through tickets and required only ordinary care as to the date limits; not much scalper's stuff turned up on the west-bound. Pat called again as he closed the door of the chair car behind him a shade less harshly for tickets, because one naturally respects more people who ride in the chair car; and then there are women. One speaks more civilly to women passengers, but scans their transportation more carefully. However, he wasn't thinking of women's wiles as he quietly roused the sleepers and asked for their credentials. They were worn, tired-looking women; haggard, a good many of them, from cat naps snatched in the specially devised discomfort chairs, while their more fortunate sisters slept peacefully back in the hair-mattressed Pullman berths. He was thinking solely as he mechanically went through the checking operations, of a cattle-man in a canvas coat, smooth face, and red tie, who should by rights be now halfway

down the car, just ahead of him. But conductor Francis didn't look. His eyes never rose beyond the passenger under his nose, for in front of a company detective the hate and the curiosity are all concealed; the conductor is strictly on dress parade with a sting in his right arm that he would like to land directly under the spotter's ear.

A shabby traveling man—a cigar man—handed up a local ticket. It was for Antelope Gap. Pat Francis looked at it for a minute before he punched it and stuck it in his pocket.

"We don't stop at Antelope Gap tonight," said he shortly.

"Don't stop?" echoed the cigar man, wide awake in a fraction of a second. "*Vy*, since ven? Dey *tolt* me you dit," he cried in the most injured tone on the train.

"Can't help it."

"But *vy-e?*"

"I'm late."

"Bud y' god-do!" cried the cigar man, raising a note of absolute terror, as Pat Francis passed calmly on without attempting to controvert the confidence of the drummer.

"Ain't you *god-do?*" appealed the latter, weakening a bit as he realized he was against a quiet man and hard.

"Not on local transportation. Tickets!" he continued to the next.

But the cigar man happily came of a race that does not uncomplainingly submit, and he kicked vociferously, as Pat Francis expected he would. By the time the excited salesman had woke everybody up in his end of the car and worked himself into a lather, Pat came at him with a proposition.

"Where you going from Antelope?"

"*Vild Hat.*"

"What's the matter with going up to Wild Hat to-night, and I'll give you a train check back to Antelope on Two to-morrow; then you can get back on Seventy-One to the Bend?"

The injured man considered quickly, accepted speedily. Two hundred miles for nothing. "My frient! Haff a cigar, aber *don* for-ged my dransbordation back, *will* you?" The conductor nodded as he took the cigar stoically and moved on. It was one stop saved, and the Antelope stop was a

terror any time with a big train like Number One.

Francis has reached the rear of the chair car, when he had an impression he had forgotten something. He stopped to think. The cattleman! Turning, he looked back sharply over the passengers. He even walked slowly back through the car looking for the fellow. There was no cattleman in sight, and walking back, Francis dismissed him with the conclusion that he must have gotten off at the Bend; and at once the air in the chair car smelt fresher and cleaner. Into the sleepers then—that was easy. Only to take the batch of envelopes from each porter or conductor, and tear off the coupons, and in the Portland sleeper a half-fare which meant only a little row with the tactless man who had gone into a bitter discussion with a conductor the day before away back at the Missouri River, as to whether his boy should pay fare. Instead of gracefully paying when called on, he had abused the conductor, who, maybe because there was a "spotter" sitting by, had felt compelled for self-protection to collect the half rate. But

in retaliation for the abuse the conductor had reported to the next conductor a half-fare in the Portland sleeper, and thus started an endless chain of annoyance that would haunt the traveler all the way to the coast. But sometime travelers will study tact, and forswear abuse and its penalties.

Conductor Francis, finishing the string of loaded Pullmans, sat down in the smoking room of the last car with the hind end brakeman to straighten out his collections. The headlight of the pusher threw in a yellow dazzle of light on them, and the continuous cut of its fire boomed from the stack. Pat Francis, setting down his lamp, began to sniff.

"Smell anything?" he asked presently of his companion.

"No," answered the brakeman, drawing his head from the curtain hood under which he had been looking out into the storm.

"Something here don't smell right," said Francis shortly, sorting his tickets. "Where are we?"

"Getting out of the gorge."

Francis looked at his watch. "Is Jack

holding his own?" ventured the brakeman.

"Just about."

"Stop at Antelope to-night?"

"Not on your life."

"Red Cloud?"

"Not to-night."

"How about the pusher?"

"All the way over the Horseback to-night."

"That's the stuff."

"That's Bucks. Bucks is the stuff," said Pat Francis, arbitrarily picking up his lamp to go forward. Two minutes later, he was in the smoker, bending over the Italian and shaking him.

"Got your ticket, Tony?"

"No gotta ticket."

"Money?"

"No gotta d'mun."

"Come on, then!" Francis gripped him by the collar.

"Whata do?"

"Throw you off."

The Italian drew back to resist. They parleyed a moment longer, only because

Francis was bluffing. If he had meant to stop the train at any point he would have said nothing—simply dragged the fellow out by the hair.

At last the Italian produced three dollars and a half. It was only enough to check him to Red Cloud. He wanted to go through, and the fare was eleven dollars and twenty cents.

The silent conductor stuck the money in his pocket, and drew his cash-fare slips. Just then the pusher whistled a stop signal. Francis started, suddenly furious at the sound. Shoving the slips into his pocket, he hurried to the vestibule and put his head angrily out. Ahead he saw only old John Parker's lamp and streamers. John had slid his door before Francis could open the vestibule. That was why the conductor loved him, because nobody, not even he himself, ever got ahead of John. When Francis poked his head out to look for trouble, John Parker's head was already in the wind inspecting the trouble, which came this time from the hind end. Looking back, Francis saw a blaze leaping from a journal box.

"Just as I expected," he muttered, with a freezing word. "That hind-end man couldn't smell a tar bucket if you stuck his head into it. Get your grease, John," he shouted at the old baggageman, "and a pair of brasses. Hustle!"

There was hardly time for the crew to slip into their overcoats, when Moore made a sullen stop. But old John Parker was ready, and waiting ahead of the stop with a can of grease, because John didn't have any overcoat. He hustled bad nights without an overcoat; for his two girls were at boarding school back in Illinois. John picked up enough every month carrying dogs to buy an overcoat, but the dog money went largely for music and French, which were extras in Illinois; so the girls *parlez-vous'd*, and John piled out without any overcoat.

Pat Francis stormed worse than the mountains as he followed him. All the scheming to save a single stop was blazing away in the hot box. Moore, on the head engine, was too angry to leave his cab. It was just a bit too exasperating.

The pusher crew stood by, and the second engineer helped just a little.

But it was Pat Francis and John, with the safeties screaming bedlam in their ears, with the sleet creeping confidently down their backs, and with the water soaking unawares up their legs—it was Pat and John, silent and stubborn, who dug bitterly at the sizzling box, flung out the blazing waste, set the screw, twisted it, hooked out the smoking brasses, shoved in the new ones, dumped the grease, stuffed the waste, and raised their lamps for Moore before the last of the bad words had blown out of the head cab and down the cañon. With a squeaking and groaning and jerking, with a vicious break-away and an anxious interval whenever a pair of drivers let go, Moore got his enormous load rolling up the grade again, and kept her rolling hour after hour along curve and tangent to the Horseback, and across.

At the crest day broke, and the long, heavy train, far above the night and the storm, screamed for the summit yard, slowed up, halted, and every man jack of

the train crew and engine crews jumped off to shake hands with himself on the plucky run—in spite of it all, schedule and a hair better.

“How’d you ever do it, Jack?” asked Pat Francis at the head engine, as Moore crawled out of her undersides.

“How late are we?” returned the engineer, stowing his can and calling for a wrench.

“Three hours.”

“Beat the time a little, didn’t we?” laughed Moore, with a face like a lobster. “*Couldn’t* done it, Pat, if you’d stopped me anywhere. I wouldn’t done it—not for anybody. Burdick is knocked clean out, too. Are you all ready back there?” The pusher, disconnected, galloped by with a jubilant kick for the round-house; and the double-header, watered and coaled afresh, started with Number One down the mountain side.

A different start that—a running past the wind instead of into it; a sluing that brought excursionists up in a tumble as the sleepers swung lariat-like around the cañon

corners. It was only a case of hanging on after that, hanging on all the way to Wild Hat; and then, just as the Columbian Pacific train passengers left their breakfasts at Benton, Number One, gray and grimy, rolled into the junction thirty-five minutes late—and the agony was over. The connection was safe, but nobody noticed who made it. Everybody was too much occupied with the sunshine and the scenery to observe a pair of disreputable, haggard, streaked, hollow-eyed tramps who made their way modestly along the edge of the crowd that thronged the platform. It was only Francis and Moore, conductor and engineer of Number One.

The agony was over for everybody but Pat Francis. Ten days later, Bucks, superintendent of the mountain division, sat in his den at the Wickiup, reading a letter from the general manager.

Sir: On Thursday, June 28th, Conductor P. Francis, leaving M. B. on Number One, collected a cash fare of three dollars and

fifty cents from one of our special service men. He failed to issue a cash-fare slip for this as required; furthermore, he carried this passenger all the way to Benton. Kindly effect his discharge. Let it be distinctly understood that all delinquencies of this nature will be summarily dealt with.

A. W. BANNERMAN,
General Manager.

It wasn't a letter to go to the stove—not that kind of a letter; but Bucks fingered it much as Pat Francis ought to have fingered the clever detective who turned from the chair car to the "smoker" on him and from a cattleman to a "dago."

Bucks called the trainmaster. Francis was west, due to leave Benton that afternoon on Two, and, as luck would have it, to bring back the Brooklyn party from the Yellowstone. And the passenger department in Chicago was again heating the wires with injunctions to take care of them, and good care of them, because the excursion business on a new line is not only profitable, but it is hard to work up, and trouble

with an excursion in the beginning means a hoodoo for months, and maybe for years to come.

Bucks felt especially gratified to know that Pat Francis had the precious load, but what about the cash fare from Medicine Bend to Red Cloud? Bucks knew these things couldn't be trifled with—not on his line—and he faced the pleasant prospect of next morning greeting his right bower in the passenger service with an accusation of theft and a summary discharge. If he had only asked me for three dollars and a half, thought Bucks sorely. He would rather have given his own pay check than to have had Pat Francis hold up one dollar.

And Pat Francis, taciturn, sphinx-like, was punching transportation at that particular moment on Number Two on the run east from Benton. Checking passengers, keeping one eye on the ventilators and the other on the date limits, working both pencils, both hands, both ears, both ends of the punch, and both sides of the car at the same time.

There wasn't a cinder to break the even

enjoyment of the run up to the clouds. Everybody was going home, and going home happy. From the Pullmans—it was warm and sunny in the mountains—came nothing but rag time and Brooklyn yells. To describe our scenery might be invidious, but the grade where Number Two was then climbing would alone make the fortune of an ordinary eastern scenic line.

The Overland Freight, Number Sixty-six, east-bound with a long train of tea, was pulling out of Toltec station as Number Two stuck its head into the foot of the Moose.

At Toltec, on the day run, we take a man's breath and give him large value for his money in a bit of the prettiest engineering anywhere on earth.

Toltec lies in the Powder Range, near the foot of a great curve called the Moose, because every time an engineer slips the head of his train into it he is glad to hold his breath till he gets it out.

The Toltec Moose is engineering magnificent; but it is railroading without words—unless one counts the wicked

words. Eagle Pass station, the head of the Moose, looks across an unspeakable gulf directly down into Toltec, 500 feet below, and barely a mile away. But by the rail we count seven miles around that curve, and without any land-grant perquisites, either.

Every train that runs the Moose is double-headed both ways, and now—this was before—they add, to keep trainmen off the relief scrap, a pusher.

That day there was no pusher behind the Overland Freight, and Number Two's crew, as they pulled out of Toltec to climb the loop, could plainly see, above and across, the storming, struggling, choking engines of the tea train as they neared with their load the summit of Eagle Pass.

The wind bore down to them in breaking waves the sucking, roaring cut of the quivering furnaces. Pat Francis stood in the open door of the baggage-car, old John Parker and the head brakeman beside him, looking together at the freight with the absorbed air of men at the bottom of a well who watch the loaded bucket near the top.

Through the thin, clear mountain air they

could almost read the numbers on the engine tenders. They could see the freight conductor start over his train for the head-end, and as they looked they saw his train break in two behind him and the rear end, parting like a snake's tail, slough off, lose headway, and roll back down the hill. The hind-end brakeman, darting from the caboose, ran up the ladder like a cat, and began setting brakes. The passenger crew saw the brake-shoes clutch in a flame at the slipping trucks, but the drawbars couldn't stand it. From one of the big tea cars a drawhead parted like a tooth. The tea train again broke in two, this time behind the rear brakeman, and the caboose with five 60,000-pound cars shot down the grade; and Number Two was now climbing above Toltec.

A volley of danger signals curled white from the freight engine across the gulf. Pat Francis sprang for the bell cord, but it was needless; his engineers at the very moment threw double chambers of air on the wheels.

It caught cards off the whist tables, and

swept baked potatoes into the bosoms of astonished diners, it spoiled the point of pretty jokes and broke the tedium of stupid stories, it upset roysterers and staggered sober men, it basted the cooks with gravy and the waiters with fruit, it sent the blood to the hearts and a chill to the brains, it was an emergency stop and a severe one—Number Two was against it. Before the frightened porters could open the vestibules the passenger engines were working in the back motion, and Number Two was scuttling down the Noose to get away from impending disaster. The trainmen huddled again in the baggage-car door, with their eyes glued on the runaways; the Noose is so perfect a curve that every foot of their flight could be seen. It was a race backwards to save the passenger train; but for every mile they could crowd into its wheels the runaways were making two. Pat Francis saw it first—saw it before they had covered half the distance back to Toltec. They could never make the hill west of the Noose; it wasn't in steam to beat gravity; moreover, if they crowded Number Two

too hard she might fly an elevation, and go into the gulf. It is one thing to run down hill, and another thing to fall down hill. The tea train was falling down hill.

Francis turned to bareheaded John Parker, and handed him his watch and his money.

"What do you mean?" John Parker choked the words out, because he knew what he meant.

"Turn this stuff in to Bucks, John, if I don't make it. It's all company money."

The brakeman, greenish and dazed, steadied himself with a hand on the jamb; the baggageman stared wild-eyed through his rusty lenses. "Pat," he faltered, "what do you mean?"

"I'll drop off at the Toltec switch and maybe I can open it to catch that string—we'll never make it this way, John, in God's world."

"You might a'most as well jump out into the cañon; you'll never live to use a switch key, Pat—we're crowding a mile a minute—"

Francis looked at him steadily as he

pulled his ring and took a switch key off the bunch.

"They're crowding Two, John."

The car slued under them. John Parker tore off his spectacles.

"Pat, I'm a lighter man than you—give me the switch key!" he cried, gripping the conductor's shoulder as he followed him out the door to the platform.

"No."

"Your children are younger than mine, Pat. Give me the key."

"This is my train, John. Ask Bucks to look after my insurance."

With these words, Francis tore the old man's hand roughly away. When a minute is a mile, action is quick. Sixty, seventy seconds more meant the Toltec switch, and the conductor already hung from the bottom step of the baggage-car.

Pat Francis was built like a gorilla. He swung with his long arms in and out from the reeling train into a rhythm, one foot dangling in the suck of dust and cinders, the other bracing lightly against the step tread. Then, with the switch key in his

mouth; with Parker's thin hair streaming over him, and a whirlwind sucking to the wheels under him; with Number Two's drivers racing above him and a hundred passengers staring below him, Pat Francis let go.

Men in the sleepers, only half understanding, saw as he disappeared a burst of alkali along the track. Only old John Parker's gray eye could see that his conductor, though losing his feet, had rolled clear of the trucks and drivers, and was tumbling in the storm center like a porcupine. Above him the tea cars were lurching down the grade. Old John, straining, saw Francis stagger to his feet and double back like a jack-knife on the ballast. A lump jumped into the baggageman's throat, but Francis' head rose again out of the dust; he raised again on his hands, and dragging after him one leg like a dead thing, crawled heavily towards the switch. He reached the stand and caught at it. He pulled himself up on one leg, and fumbled an instant at the lock, then he jerked the target. As it fell, clutched in both his hands, the caboose of

the tea train leaped on the tongue rail. The fore truck shot into the switch. The heels, caught for a hundredth of a second in the slue, flew out, and like the head of a foaming cur the caboose doubled frantically on its tailers. The tea cars tripped, jumped the main rail like cannon balls, one, two, three, four, five—out and into the open gulf.

The crash rolled up the gorge and down. It drove eagles from their nests and wolves from their hollows. Startled birds wheeling above the headlong cars shrieked a chorus; a cloud like smoke followed the wreck down the mountain side. And the good people on Number Two, the pleasure seekers that Pat Francis was taking care of—\$125 a month—saw it all and tried to keep cool and think.

He lay prostrate across the road, a bruised and dirty and bloody thing. John Parker, stumbling on rickety knees, reached him first, and turned him over. John first spoke to him, but he spoke again and again before the bloodshot eyes reluctantly opened. And then Pat Francis, choking,

spitting, gasping, clutching at John Parker's bony arm, raised his head. It fell back into the cinders. But he doggedly raised it again—and shook the broken teeth from between his lips—and lived. His face was like a section of beefsteak, and the iron leg that struck the ballast last had snapped twice under him. A few minutes afterward he lay in the stateroom of the forward sleeper, and tried with his burning, swollen tongue to talk to Brooklyn men who feelingly stared at him, and to Brooklyn women who prettily cried at him, and to old John Parker who unsteadily swore at him as he fanned his own whiskers and Pat Francis' head with the baggage clip.

When Number Two rolled into Medicine Bend next morning, Bucks climbed aboard, and without ceremony elbowed his way through the excursionists dressing in the aisles to the injured conductor's stateroom. He was in there a good bit. When he came out, the chief priests of Brooklyn crowded around to say fast things to the superintendent about his conductor and their conductor. As they talked, Bucks looked in a

minute over their heads; he did that way when thinking. Then he singled out the Depew of the party and put his hand on his shoulder.

"Look here," said Bucks, and his words snapped like firecrackers, "I want you gentlemen to do something for your conductor."

"We've made up a purse of \$300 for him, my friend," announced the spokesman gladly.

"I don't mean that; not that. He's in trouble. You needn't waste any breath on me. I know that man as well as if I'd made him. I'll tell you what I want. I want you to come upstairs and dictate your account of the accident to my stenographer. While you're eating breakfast, he'll copy it and you can all sign it afterward. Will you?"

"Will we? Get your slave!"

"I'll tell you why," continued Bucks, addressing the Brooklyn man impressively. "You look like a man who, maybe, knows what trouble is—"

"I do."

"I thought so," exclaimed Bucks, warm-

ing. "If that's so, we belong to the same lodge—same degree. You see, there's charges against him. They've had spotters after him," added Bucks, lowering his voice to the few gentlemen who crowded about.

"There's plenty of Brooklyn men here for a lynching!"

Bucks smiled a far-off smile. "The boys wouldn't trouble you to help if they could catch them. I want your statement to send in to headquarters with Francis' answer to the charges. They tried to make him out a thief, but I've just found out they haven't touched him. His explanation is perfectly straight."

The men of Brooklyn tumbled up the Wickiup stairs. At breakfast, the news traveled faster than hot rolls. When the paper was drawn, the signing began; but they so crowded the upper floor that Bucks was afraid of a collapse, and the testimonial was excitedly carried down to the waiting-room. Then the women wanted to sign. When they began, it looked serious, for no woman could be hurried, and those who were creatures of sentiment dropped a tear

on their signatures, thinking the paper was to hang in Pat Francis' parlor.

In the end Bucks had to hold Number Two thirty minutes, and to lay out the remains of the tea train, which was still waiting to get out of the yard.

After the last yell from the departing excursionists, Bucks went back to his office, and dictated for the general manager a report of the Toltec wreck. Then he wrote this letter to him:

Replying to yours of the eighth, relative to the charges against conductor P. J. Francis. I have his statement in the matter. The detective who paid the cash fare to Red Cloud was not put off there because no stop was made, the train being that night under my orders to make no stops below Wild Hat. It was the first of the Brooklyn Yellowstone excursions, and Chicago was anxious to make the Columbian Pacific connection. This was done in spite of Number One's coming into this division three hours late and against a hard storm. At Wild Hat the detective, rigged as an Italian, was

overlooked in the hurry and carried by. While no cash-fare slip was issued, the fare was turned in by Conductor Francis to the auditor in the regular way, and investigation of his trip report will, he tells me, confirm his statement of fact. If so, I think you will agree with me that he is relieved of any suspicion of dishonesty in the matter. I have nevertheless cautioned him on his failure to hand the passenger a fare-voucher, and have informed him that his explanation was entirely satisfactory; in fact, after the affair at Toltec he deserves a great deal more from the company. By request of the Brooklyn excursionists, I inclose an expression of their opinion of Conductor Francis' jump from Number Two to set the Toltec switch. All of which is respectfully submitted.

J. F. BUCKS,
Superintendent.

Pat Francis is still running passenger. But Alfabet Smith's men work more now on the East End.